# 2 Goal and Key Components of Effective Language Arts Instruction

*The child's first instruction must employ the most valid and effective methods available to ensure mastery of the skills that lay the foundation for further reading achievement.*

The *Reading/Language Arts Framework* specifies the strategic and systematic reading and language skills and knowledge that students should learn and teachers should teach to achieve competence in the language arts. A primary assumption is that students master particular skills and knowledge at designated points in time and that earlier skills are foundational and requisite for later, more complex higher-order skills and knowledge. Those skills and knowledge are carefully mapped out in the *English–Language Arts Content Standards.* A critical feature of the standards and this framework is that gaps, delays, and deficits in skills and knowledge experienced in previous grades must still be addressed responsively and responsibly.

## Goal of Effective Language Arts Instruction

The knowledge and skills that enable eleventh- and twelfth-grade students to verify facts from public documents and critique their truthfulness, write carefully constructed persuasive essays, and develop and present a research question and supporting evidence with multimedia do not begin in the eleventh grade but originate in the early grades through careful development of language arts competence in specific and integrated skills and knowledge (National Research Council, 1998; U.S. Department of

Education, 1999). The task of California schools, then, is to develop and deliver a language arts curriculum that is systematic and carefully articulated and establishes specific, continuing standards leading to competence and alignment with the *English–Language Arts Content Standards.*

The goal of developing lifelong readers and writers begins early in students' lives and represents a unique balance of competence, motivation, accessibility, and experiences with print (Adams, 1990; Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; National Research Council, 1998). When students develop competence in the fundamentals of reading and writing, they increase their motivation to achieve. Educators should be keenly aware of the inherent difficulty of learning to read and write in English and of the integral linkage between proficiency and motivation. Difficulties in mastering the elements of reading, writing, listening, and speaking can easily and directly "stifle motivation . . . [and] in turn hamper instructional efforts" (National Research Council, 1998). The child's first instruction must employ the most valid and effective methods available to ensure mastery of the skills that lay the foundation for further reading achievement (National Reading Panel, 2000; Torgesen, 2001).

## Key Components of Effective Language Arts Instruction

Assumption: The effectiveness of instruction is measured by student performance according to valid, reliable assessment aligned with the language arts content standards.

Knowledge gained over the past three decades reveals the multiple contexts that shape the quantity and quality of learning (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; Carroll, 1963, 1989; Coyne, Kame`enui, and Simmons, 2001; Mosenthal, 1984, 1985). Effective language arts programs are dynamic and involve professionals, policies,

instructional materials, and practices that interact in complex ways. The best practices of any profession are not gained in a vacuum but are implemented and sustained in environments that support, enhance, and reinforce those practices and include several dimensions (Kame`enui, Good, and Harn, 2004; Smith, Simmons, and Kame'enui, 1998; Tongneri and Anderson, 2003).

In 1995 the California Reading Task Force identified four components that a balanced, comprehensive approach to reading must contain: (1) a strong literature, language, and comprehension program that includes a balance of oral and written language; (2) an organized, explicit skills program that includes phonemic awareness (sounds in words), phonics, and decoding skills to address the needs of the emergent reader; (3) ongoing diagnosis that informs teaching and assessment that ensures accountability; and (4) a powerful early intervention program that provides individual tutoring for students at risk of failure in reading. While each of these areas were further supported by the National Reading Panel Report (2000), that Report as well as more recent research has identified an additional critical instructional component of providing instruction that develops a child's fluency in reading connected text (Good, Simmons and Kame`ennui, 2001; Shaywitz, 2003; Torgesen, 2001; 2002).

The key components of an effective language arts program (an expansion of the four elements contained in *Every Child a Reader* [California Department of Education 1995]) are assessment, instruction, instructional time, instructional programs and materials, instructional grouping and scheduling, differentiated instruction, classroom instructional

and management practices, professional development, administrative practices, parent and community involvement, motivation, effort, and academic language. Each of the components is described in the following sections. *Note:* Both the strength of the components and their strategic integration are required for effective instruction in the language arts (Simmons, Kame`enui, Coyne, and Chard, 2002).

*Assessment in the Language Arts*

Assessment anchored to important learning objectives should provide the basis for instruction. Different types of assessment used at strategic points (before, during, and after instruction) provide information critical to determining what to teach, how much the students are learning, and whether the students have achieved mastery (Good, Simmons, and Kame'enui, 2001; Howell and Nolet, 2000; Kame`enui, Good, and Harn, 2005). Characteristics of the assessment component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- Assessment of student performance is used to determine what students need to learn and what teachers need to teach. It is also used to determine what students have already learned well and what teachers do not have to teach.
- Indicators of critical skills and strategies are used to identify students at risk of difficulty and in need of specialized instruction.
- Ongoing assessment of student performance is linked closely to instruction and curriculum activities as well as school-site goals, district and state standards, and state assessments.

- Teachers receive training and support to manage assessment. Teachers or trained paraprofessionals can make quick, focused checks of an individual student's progress while the remaining students are engaged in meaningful work.
- Formal and informal as well as formative and summative measures are used to document student performance.
- Ongoing progress monitoring and other assessment data are used by teachers to reflect on instructional effectiveness and to identify support teachers may need to improve their practice.
- Summative assessment assists sites, districts, and the state in monitoring the effectiveness of established programs.

*Instruction in the Language Arts*

High-quality instruction is at the heart of all good language arts programs. A comprehensive, balanced language arts program in which curriculum and instruction are differentiated according to assessed needs should be provided to all students (National Research Council, 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000). Characteristics of the instruction component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- The curriculum for reading and the language arts in kindergarten through grade three provides explicit and systematic instruction and diagnostic support in:
  - Phonemic awareness
  - Phonics
  - Decoding
  - Word-attack skills
  - Spelling
  - Vocabulary

- Fluency in reading connected text
- Comprehension skills
- Writing skills and strategies and their application
- Listening and speaking skills and strategies

• The curriculum for reading and the language arts in grades four through twelve provides explicit and systematic instruction and diagnostic support in:

- Word-attack skills (e.g., decoding and structural as applied to multisyllabic words)
- Spelling
- Vocabulary
- Fluency in reading connected text
- Comprehension skills, including contextual skills
- Text-handling and strategic reading skills
- Writing skills and strategies and their application
- Listening and speaking skills and their application

• For students in grades four through twelve who do not demonstrate competence in the skills and knowledge required in kindergarten through grade three, assessments are conducted and systematic instruction is provided in the necessary prerequisite skills, such as:

- Phonemic awareness
- Specific instruction in decoding and phonics
- Fluency in reading connected text
- Vocabulary and language development
- Comprehension strategies

- Teachers adapt learning contexts to challenge and extend the skills of advanced learners. Opportunities for acceleration and enrichment are provided.
- Even with the highest-quality classroom instruction, some students have difficulty progressing according to grade-level expectations. For those students, assessment tools to diagnose specific instructional needs, together with instructional support and age-appropriate materials, delivered explicitly, systematically and with urgency are essential to address foundational skill deficits and accelerate student learning.

*Instructional Time*

Opportunities for students to learn are determined in part by the amount and use of time allocated for instruction. For proficiency in the language arts to be achieved, an adequate amount of time must be allocated to instruction, and that time must be protected from interruptions (Foorman and Torgesen, 2001; Harn, Kame`enui, and Simmons, In Press; Simmons, Kame'enui, Good, Harn, Cole, and Braun, 2002; Tongneri and Anderson, 2003). Characteristics of the instructional time component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- At the primary level a minimum of two and one-half hours of instructional time is allocated to language arts instruction daily. This time is given priority and is protected from interruption. It is the responsibility of both teachers and administrators to protect language arts instructional time.
- In grades four through eight, two hours (or two periods) of instructional time are allocated to language arts instruction daily through core instructional periods or within a self-contained classroom.

- In grades nine through twelve, all students participate in a minimum of one course per semester of language arts instruction.
- Engaged academic time (the time students actively participate in appropriately challenging tasks) is maximized.
- Classroom and school time are allocated to activities and content highly correlated with essential reading and literacy skills.
- Students with special learning needs are provided additional instructional time and support. Additional time is allocated within the school day, before school, after school, and during vacation periods as necessary. At the secondary level additional courses and opportunities outside the school day and year are provided for students having difficulties with reading.
- The school extends learning time for all students by promoting independent reading outside school in daily at-home reading assignments and expectations, use of summer reading lists, and family and community literacy activities.

*Instructional Programs and Materials*

Effective instructional programs and materials based on the English–language arts content standards and current and confirmed research can greatly influence the amount and rate of learning in classrooms (Foorman and Torgesen, 2001; Harn, Kame`enui, and Simmons, In Press; Simmons and Kame`ennui, 2003). Characteristics of the instructional programs and materials component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- Instructional materials incorporate specific strategies, teaching/instructional activities, procedures, examples, and opportunities for review and application consistent with current and confirmed research.
- Instructional materials prioritize and sequence essential skills and strategies in a logical, coherent manner and demonstrate the relationship between fundamental skills
(e.g., decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension).
- Instructional materials address or reinforce content-area standards in mathematics, science, and history–social science whenever feasible.
- Instructional materials include activities that relate directly to the learning objectives. Extraneous material is kept to a minimum.
- In support of practice and motivation, students at every grade level have access to and are encouraged to use a collection of interesting and suitable library books in addition to their required texts.
- Curricular programs and instructional materials provide specific suggestions for special-needs students.
- Instructional materials for students in grades four through twelve who have reading difficulties align with age-appropriate interests and offer systematic practice of needed skills. Materials are available on topics that motivate learners to read.
- Instructional materials for English learners address the same curricular content described in this framework for English speakers and give additional emphasis to the structures and systems of English, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.
- A validated process is used to select both print and electronic instructional materials to promote high levels of achievement for the full array of learners.

*Instructional Grouping and Scheduling*

The purpose of instructional grouping and scheduling is to maximize opportunities to learn. First of all, content must govern instruction. Then instructional grouping and scheduling are used to enhance learning opportunities (Bos and Vaughn, 2002; Harn, Kame`enui, and Simmons, In Press). Characteristics of the instructional grouping and scheduling component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- Instruction is provided in flexible groupings to maximize student performance. Whole-group instruction or heterogeneous grouping may be used when the objectives are appropriate for the range of learners in the classroom. Homogeneous grouping may be used to customize specific instruction for assessed student needs.
- Group size and composition are adjusted to accommodate and reflect student progress and instructional objectives (flexible and dynamic grouping).
- Tutoring (peer or adult or both) is used judiciously to supplement (not supplant) explicit teacher-delivered instruction. It aligns with classroom objectives and instruction.
- Cross-class or cross-grade grouping is used when appropriate to maximize opportunities to tailor instruction to students' performance levels. Such grouping is appropriate when it facilitates teaching students within a similar age span and achievement range. As a general rule, differences should be within one year in kindergarten through grade three, two years in grades four through eight, and three years in grades nine through twelve.
- Centers and independent activities are used judiciously and are aligned with instructional goals and objectives focused on achieving grade-level standards.

*Differentiated Instruction*

All students are expected to meet or exceed the grade-level expectations set forth in the *English–Language Arts Content Standards.* Differentiated instruction aims to optimize learning opportunities and outcomes for all students by tailoring instruction to meet their current level of knowledge and prerequisite skills (Bickel, 1998; Bos and Vaughn, 2002; Simmons, Kame`enui, Coyne, and Chard, 2002). Students with a wide range of learning needs can be expected in almost any classroom, and their needs are addressed more fully in Chapter 7. Characteristics of the differentiated instruction component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- Students with reading difficulties or disabilities are provided with opportunities for more intensive, systematic teaching and practice to learn the skills and strategies needed for meeting the standards. Those students with more intensive needs requiring special education services may need further instructional differentiation based on their individualized education programs.
- Teachers adapt learning contexts to stimulate and extend the proficiency of students who are advanced learners. Opportunities for acceleration and enrichment are provided.
- English learners develop proficiency in English and in the concepts and skills contained in the *English–Language Arts Content Standards.* Emphasis is placed on (1) instruction in reading and writing; and (2) simultaneous instruction in the acquisition of academic vocabulary and the phonological, morphological, and syntactical structures of English already understood by English speakers.
- Teachers adapt instruction for students with multiple needs (e.g., gifted English learners or students identified as gifted and eligible for special education services).

*Classroom Instructional and Management Practices*

Classroom and instructional management practices promote student engagement and maximize instructional time and effectiveness (Bickel, 1998; Lewis, Sugai and Colvin, 1998). Characteristics of the classroom instructional and management practices component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- Classrooms are highly interactive and provide instruction, constructive feedback, and high levels of engagement together with appropriate activities and resources.
- Academic and social expectations are well established and are explicitly taught at the school and classroom levels. Classroom and schoolwide discipline plans and procedures are implemented consistently by all staff.
- The links between instruction, behavior, and the curriculum are so clear and strong that tasks and instruction are assigned at appropriate levels, students have a high probability of being successful, lessons are well paced, and the classroom/school environment is supportive.
- Teachers plan and manage whole-class and small-group lessons, independent student work, assessment tasks, and instructional materials efficiently and effectively so that the students are actively engaged, instructional time is maximized, and lesson objectives are achieved.

*Professional Development*

The preparation of teachers and ongoing support for their continuing professional development are critical to the quality of schools and increases in student achievement

(Borman, Hewes, Overman, and Brown, 2003; Kame`ennui, Good, and Harn, 2004; Tongneri and Anderson, 2003). Characteristics of the professional development component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- Professional development for teachers focuses on student learning, with attention given to tailoring curriculum and instruction to students' needs, all of which is compatible with current research and the English–language arts content standards.
- Educators participate in the planning of their own professional learning.
- Activities are designed to be ongoing and in-depth and include a variety of strategies to help educators apply what they have learned and sustain improved instruction.
- Time is allocated for educators to reflect, discuss, analyze, and refine their own professional practices and to plan and refine instruction accordingly.
- The administration makes a commitment to ensure support, ongoing follow-up, and evaluation of professional development.

*Administrative Practices*

Administrative support of language arts instruction reminds all those involved in education that reform efforts are not considered effective unless they contribute to increased student achievement. Strong instructional leadership characterizes effective schools and can help maintain a focus on high-quality instruction (Bickel, 1998; Borman, Hewes, Overman, and Brown, 2003; Tongneri and Anderson, 2003). Characteristics of

the administrative practices component in an effective language arts program are that administrators:

- Are knowledgeable about the English–language arts content standards and effective language arts programs. They work with teachers to create a coherent plan in the school for language arts instruction that is based on assessment and provides access to such programs for all students.
- Maximize and protect instructional time for language arts and organize the resources and personnel needed to support classroom assessment and instruction.
- Support the development of explicit schoolwide, grade-level, and individual performance goals, are aware of school and classroom language arts performance, institute practices to provide school-level performance information in a timely manner, and act to ensure that learning is adequate and is sustained over time.
- Ensure that all teachers are well trained in reading and the language arts and support teachers in their implementation of effective programs.
- Allocate resources, time, and staff in all grades for students who have not demonstrated competence on reading and writing standards. A commitment and plan of action are established to ensure that all students read and write at or above grade level.

*Parent and Community Involvement*

Ensuring that California's students are proficient in the language arts is everyone's concern. As stakeholders in that goal, parents, community members, college and university partners, and business and industry can all make significant contributions toward expanding student learning opportunities and designing and implementing exemplary language arts programs (Christenson, 2004; Tongneri and Anderson, 2003).

Characteristics of the parent and community involvement component in an effective language arts program are as follows:

- Parents are well informed about the English–language arts content standards, the district's curriculum and assessment program, and the progress of their children in learning to read, write, speak, and listen.
- Parents are encouraged to involve themselves in education and are supported in their efforts to improve their children's learning in reading and the language arts.
- Materials and programs are organized so that parents, siblings, and community members can provide extended learning experiences.
- College and university partners collaborate with schools and districts in designing and providing professional development, tutoring, and other programs to support increased student proficiency in language arts.
- The community is used as a classroom abundant in examples of how and why the language arts are important in our lives, our work, and our thinking.

**Other Considerations**

All stakeholders in the promotion of literacy should understand that the inclusion of the key instructional components described previously is the goal for all schools. Additional factors that are important in a successful language arts program are students' personal attributes, such as motivation and effort, and development of academic language.

*Motivation*

Successful teachers help students develop fundamental skills in reading that provide the foundation for all later work in the language arts. As students begin to develop those skills, effective teachers nurture the students' desire or motivation to learn for a number of reasons, including recognition of the critical link between the amount of reading students do and their vocabulary development (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; Snow, 2002). In language arts instruction motivation not only enhances the learning process but is also a necessary precursor for students choosing to read on their own. Motivation to read is especially important in light of the English–language arts content standards, which call for students to do a significant amount of reading in addition to their regular school reading: by the fourth grade, one-half million words annually; by the eighth grade, one million words annually; and by the twelfth grade, two million words annually.

The important dimensions of motivation to read are an individual's self-concept as a reader and the value placed on reading (Gambrell et al., 1996). Self-concept derives in large part from the individual's skill in reading; that is, by mastering standards in reading, the student becomes motivated. The value of reading can be promoted by teachers in many ways, such as by:

- Displaying their own enthusiasm for reading and appreciation of its value
- Providing appropriate reading materials (readable and interesting)
- Providing instruction that enables students the skills necessary for successful reading

- Creating a stimulating learning environment
- Modeling positive reading behaviors
- Encouraging students to take home books that are appropriate to their reading levels
- Encouraging parents to read to their children and to model the value of reading at home for pleasure and information

Motivation and reading for pleasure are mutually reinforcing. Reading for pleasure should be promoted in every classroom, and the school should supply a wide variety of interesting reading materials at the students' independent reading levels, allow time to read (Shefelbine, 1991), and assign reading as homework. Motivation is also linked to four key features of literacy learning: providing access to books, offering a choice of texts, establishing familiarity with a topic, and promoting social interactions about books (Gambrell et al., 1996).

Reading programs should reflect a desire for students to "compose lives in which reading matters" (Calkins, 1996). Encouraging the habit of independent reading is crucial in helping students understand and appreciate the value of reading. Independent classroom reading, particularly in kindergarten through grade six, can serve as a practical way of linking vocabulary and comprehension and complementing other instructional approaches while expanding word knowledge in a realistic setting (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002). The teacher should schedule some time for independent reading daily and should serve as a model of how to read well as students engage in silent reading with books selected by themselves or by the teacher. However, this time should not constitute a significant portion of the language arts instruction, teacher directed reading instruction is vastly superior to developing the skills students need to be proficient and independent readers (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; National Reading

Panel, 2000). A balance of encouraging wide and varied reading as much as possible and of using modeling at appropriate times in clear, demonstrative, and motivational ways is very beneficial (Sanacore, 1988).

*Effort*

Together with motivation, student effort is an essential element for successful learning. High achievers—whether in mathematics, athletics, the arts, science, or business—are successful people who consistently exert enormous effort. Of all the variables affecting success, effort is the one most within the control of the students. They must learn that in the language arts a direct relationship exists between effort and achievement, just as in sports, music, and every other discipline. Effective teachers teach that principle explicitly and create opportunities for students to demonstrate it.

Holding students to high standards conveys respect for them as learners. Feedback to students about failure on a task that could have been accomplished with more effort communicates to students that they have the abilities necessary to succeed and need to exert them. Conversely, a teacher's acceptance of less than standard work from students while knowing that they are capable of more serves only to convince students that they do not have to try or that the teacher does not believe that the students can succeed. An additional step in this process is ensuring that students have the necessary skills to successfully complete the task, or if not, provide the additional instruction the student needs to increase effort in the future (Bos and Vaughn, 2002).

Successful classrooms are places of expectation and responsibility. Young people are expected to work hard, think things through, and produce their best work. Teachers support students with a range of guides and structures, organizing the curriculum to stimulate learning and thinking, inviting and answering questions, providing positive and

corrective feedback, encouraging peer support and assistance, and creating a trusting classroom atmosphere. In successful classrooms students contribute to the flow of events and help shape the direction of discussion.

*Proficiency in Academic Language*

Proficiency in decoding and encoding skills is necessary but not sufficient for comprehending and writing about academic subject matter. Students also have to understand, use, and ultimately live the academic language of books and schooling. (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; Shefelbine, 1998)

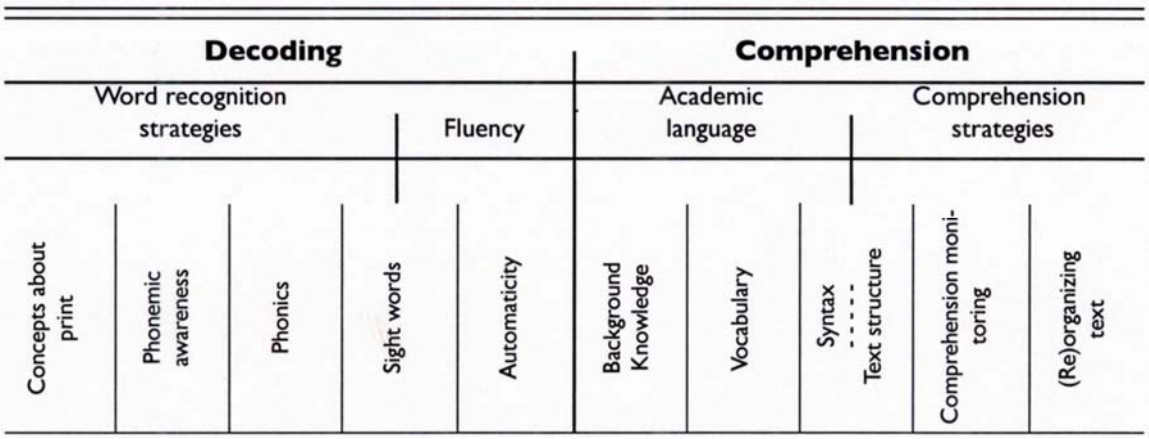
*Academic language* refers to the language of literacy and books, tests, and formal writing. Shefelbine proposes a framework of reading that includes academic language as a key component of reading comprehension (see the chart on the following page).

A number of studies and researchers have shown that academic language proficiency and its subcomponents are related to achievement in reading and writing as early as the third grade (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004; Gersten and Baker, 2000). Vocabulary is a critical element of academic language. In a study in which achievement trends of low-income students beginning in the second grade through the seventh grade were observed, a decline in word-meaning scores was identified after the third grade and in oral and silent reading comprehension in the sixth and seventh grades. Difficulties with comprehension were attributed to the challenging texts that “use more difficult, abstract, specialized, and technical words; the concepts used in textbooks also become more

abstract, and understanding them requires more sophisticated levels of background knowledge and cognition" (Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin, 1990).

Some researchers view academic language as different enough from conversational speech to be considered a second language (Gersten and Baker, 2000; Maylath, 1994, cited in Corson, 1995). Shefelbine (1998) identifies several interrelated characteristics of academic language that differ from conversational speech. Some of those aspects include language function, vocabulary, background knowledge, text structure, syntactic complexity, and abstract thinking.

Academic language is learned by being repeated and extended while learning subject matter, including literature, science, and history–social science. It is difficult to learn quickly because of its peculiar characteristics, especially its requirement for extensive knowledge of vocabulary and background. Key components of developing academic language are reading, writing, and talking about books and school subject matter. Hearing language is not enough for students to learn academic language. They must produce it by speaking and writing it. Talking about text is necessary for them to develop their active vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002; Biemiller, 1999; Corson, 1995). They must *use* words rather than just receive them passively in order to retain new vocabulary. Four strategies suggested for developing academic language are the following:




*Note:* The content of this section on proficiency in academic language has been provided by John Shefelbine, California State University, Sacramento.

1. *Reading aloud to students.* Reading aloud to students is a powerful way to build language and vocabulary (Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2002; Biemiller, 1999; Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin, 1990; Dickinson and Smith 1994; Wells, 1986). In doing so it is important to select narrative and informational books with content linguistically and conceptually challenging but still engaging and understandable (Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin, 1990). Focus should be placed on building language, vocabulary, and knowledge of content rather than on developing knowledge of print or decoding strategies. Larger proportions of analysis, prediction, and vocabulary-related talk by teachers and children are associated with higher gains in vocabulary and comprehension (Dickinson and Smith, 1994). Teachers should focus briefly on the meanings of certain words during reading and ask questions that require increased amounts of language and thinking from students.

2. *Instructional discussions.* Opportunities for students to initiate and participate in discussions on instructional topics build academic language (Stahl and Shiel, 1999). Suggested strategies for structuring those discussions include instructional conversations (Goldenberg, 1992, 1993) and questioning the author (Beck et al., 1997; Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002). Both strategies employ open-ended questions that require students to interpret a text or topic. Students respond to one another and to the teacher. In questioning the author, the teacher and students pose queries that facilitate group discussion about an author's ideas and prompt student-to-student interactions.
3. *Reading by students.* One of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension in general and of vocabulary development in particular is the amount of time students spend reading (Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding, 1988; Anderson, 1992; Corson, 1995; Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998). Although reading aloud to students is helpful in developing academic language, the central importance of students reading widely at increasingly more challenging levels cannot be overemphasized. High-interest, low-vocabulary texts, although often appropriate for building fluency, are not as likely to produce growth in academic language. To obtain such growth, students must read a great deal at school and at home. Classroom, instructional, and schoolwide strategies to encourage and inspire student independent reading are essential. Students should master skills in reading early and well so that they will be able to read independently. Those who are not fluent readers and do not have the foundation skills to understand a variety of types of print do not engage

willingly and joyfully in reading (Coyne, Kame`ennui, and Simmons, 2001; Juel, 1988; Nathan and Stanovich, 1991).

4. *Writing by students.* Students also practice and develop academic language in their writing as they respond to and analyze literature and compose essays and reports on a variety of topics. Incorporating advanced vocabulary and complex language structures appropriately into their own writing is the eventual goal of development in academic language, and frequent opportunities to write for a variety of purposes are essential to consolidating gains. Teachers should analyze and use student writing to guide further instruction and application of academic language features and conventions (Spandel, 2001; Spandel and Lane, 2003).